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ABSTRACT

This short paper asks three related questions: What factors erode ethnic ties? What factors support ethnic identification? What roles does ethnicity play in the process of assimilation? Data were obtained through a sample survey of registered voters in three wards of Providence and the entire suburb of Warwick, Rhode Island. After a field test, 250 interviews were conducted over a three-month period with respondents whose surnames could be readily identified as being of Italian or Irish extraction. The conclusion which emerges from this study is that psychological attachments to one's ethnic group are very hard. Certain attributes--income, education, occupation, age, perceived ethnic discrimination, and ethnic parental background appear to have little or no direct effect on reducing these attachments, suggesting that certain ecological structures need not accompany an ethnic attitudinal disposition. The factors which appear to exercise the most direct impact on reducing ethnic attachments are generational love, area of residence, suburban environment, and intermarriage. Yet, while respondents who manifest these characteristics have a significantly less intense attachment to their ethnic group, they are still not assimilated. Among these respondents, ethnic attitudes continue to exist at levels above those of assimilation. (Author/JM)

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THE ETHNICITY ATTRIBUTE: PERSISTENCE AND CHANGE IN AN URBAN AND SUBURBAN ENVIRONMENT

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PREFACE

The Institute of Urban Research at The University of Connecticut has had a strong continuing interest in the relationship of ethnicity to problems of urban life in this region. In 1970 we published Harold J. Abramson's study "Ethnic Pluralism in the Connecticut Central City," a report on the attitudes of Connecticut's ethnic population regarding political, social, racial, and other subjects. Earlier that year the Institute had co-sponsored a statewide consultation on Connecticut's ethnic and working-class Americans. Since then, in 1971-72 we helped arrange a meeting on the Young Workers Project, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, that essentially concerned an analysis of the problems of youthful ethnic blue-collar workers. We have also participated in a number of sessions devoted to the prospects and difficulties of research and action in the ethnic-urban context.

For these reasons, and because we believe the study merits broad attention among interested scholars, we are pleased to publish a paper that has an important theoretical thrust in helping to understand ethnicity itself. Based on empirical data gathered in nearby Providence and Warwick, Rhode Island, this study focuses on three interrelated problems: what factors work to erode ethnic identification? what factors support it? what role does ethnicity play in assimilation? The results indicate that traditional factors thought to be related strongly to ethnic identification such as status, education, income, and age appear to have little impact in reducing ethnic attachments. The persistence of ethnic identifications, both in urban and suburban environments, the authors suggest, means that ethnicity will remain a potent social force affecting socio-cultural and political behavior. Those of us who believe that reaching accommodations among ethnic groups and minorities is a basic part of the urban social agenda must realize, as this study by Professors Gabriel and Savage demonstrates, that ethnicity will continue to be important in our urban areas for generations to come.

Morton J. Tenzer
Director
Institute of Urban Research

June, 1973

OVERVIEW

Current research into the related areas of ethnocentrism and assimilation attempts predominantly to demonstrate that certain factors, most frequently "manifest" socio-economic attributes, work to erode ethnic identification and hence hasten the process of assimilation. Little systematic attention has been paid to those factors which serve to re-enforce attachment to the ethnic group and even less attention has been given to the role that both kinds of factors play in the assimilation process. This short paper attempts an examination into all three of these problems. It asks three related questions: What factors erode ethnic ties? What factors support ethnic identification? And finally, what roles does ethnicity play in the process of assimilation?

Much if not most of the research addressed to ethnicity and assimilation has been a prisoner of its methodology, relying too heavily upon the aggregative approach. While this approach has merit, it suffers from having to equate ethnicity and assimilation with the "movement" of aggregate populations exhibiting or lacking certain social and economic attributes. The result is that neither ethnicity nor assimilation can be located, measured, and indeed, even defined, apart from the characteristics of these aggregate populations or their observed aggregate behavior. Such an approach must of necessity rely heavily upon inference rather than

empirical demonstration to support its conclusions.[1]

In order to overcome these difficulties what is required is the employment of a different methodology and the development of more precise definitions which permit ethnicity and assimilation as concepts in their own right to be located and measured independently of the socio-economic characteristics and overt behavior of individual respondents. While the development of adequate operational definitions remains a problem in itself, survey research techniques can overcome many of the methodological difficulties already mentioned.

I

The data upon which this study relies were obtained through a sample survey of registered voters in Providence and Warwick, Rhode Island. Respondents were selected from lists obtained for wards thirteen, five, and eight of Providence and for the entire suburb of Warwick. Respondents were selected from these wards because each represents a distinct type of ethnic population distribution. Ward thirteen is heavily populated by the Italians while ward eight is heavily Irish. Ward five is closely divided by the two

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1. Dahl and Wolfinger argue essentially that as ethnics assume the trappings of middle class life styles, stereotypical ethnic characteristics are diluted or disappear. The evidence adduced is system adaptive aggregate behavior. And indeed the trend for most Americans appears to be toward a type of material and stylistic national uniformity. Aggregate tests support the "melting pot" perspective. We believe the aggregate tests may mislead; that ethnicity is highly persistent and that more sensitive tests are needed. See: Robert Dahl, Who Governs?(New Haven: Yale University Press. 1961); Raymond E. Wolfinger, "The Development and Persistence of Ethnic Voting," American Political Science Review, LIX (December, 1965). p. 906.

ethnic groups and the Warwick suburb has Irish and Italian populations in a minority.[2] Also, each locale represents a distinct level of socio-economic achievement, ward thirteen and eight being about equally poor, ward five generally middle class, and Warwick generally better off than any of the others.[3] The total number of registered voters represented an initial universe of 70,137 potential respondents.

Each list of voters was inventoried for voters whose surnames could be readily identified as being of Irish or Italian extraction.[4] Each name was then assigned a number. The total "ethnic population" resulting from this name count was 33,295. The test sample was selected by computing first the percentage of the total ethnic population residing within each of the four areas and deriving samples both valid statistically and apportioned according to the relative sizes of the Italian or Irish group. Respondents for each ethnic group were selected at random and, after a field test, two hundred and fifty interviews were conducted over a three-month period.[5]

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2. The ethnic population ratios are as follows: Ward 13: 4.9 to 1; Ward 8: 1 to 3.0; Ward 5: 1.24 to 1; Warwick: 1 to 1.4. All figures express Italian voters compared to the number of Irish voters within the geographic unit.
3. The standardized status level scores for each area can be found in Sidney Goldstein and Kurt B. Mayer, The People of Rhode Island: 1960 (Providence: Rhode Island Development Council, 1963), pp. 6-39.
4. The techniques of selecting ethnic respondents on the basis of surnames seems generally valid. Out of two hundred and fifty interviews, we only encountered twelve misidentifications, and ten of those were females who had married men of Irish extraction and who were listed by their married name.
5. The number of interviews holds the study statistically confident at a level of ninety-five per cent with a tolerated error of seven per cent.

II

In developing a definition for ethnicity and assimilation it must be remembered that unexamined reliance upon either socio-economic or behavioral indicators for each concept will immediately confront us with the same difficulty encountered by the aggregative approach. What is required, then, is a set of definitions which are both conceptually and operationally distinct from socio-economic attributes and overt behavior. In order to free the definitions from any ecological or behavioral burdens which may or may not occur simultaneously, it may be better to define ethnicity and assimilation in terms of purely attitudinal dimensions. Accordingly ethnicity may be viewed as comprising a certain set of attitudes while assimilation is viewed as involving some movement away from these attitudes. More complete definitions are offered below.

> Ethnicity is that general attitudinal orientation by which an individual perceives himself as being part of an ethnic group. This sense of self-identification extends to the group, its membership, its values and traditions.[6]

For purposes of this study the following definition of assimilation is offered.

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6. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the presence of ethnic attitudes does not necessarily imply ethnic political or social behavior. In all probability, ethnic attitudes act as dispositive attributes which, given the proper trigger mechanism, will translate into overt behavior. For more on this point see Richard A. Gabriel, Ethnic Attitudes and Political Behavior In City and Suburb, (Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 1969).

Assimilation is that measurable attitudinal movement away from ethnic identification.

The value of the above definitions lies in their operational aspects. Both ethnicity and assimilation are viewed as attitudinal dimensions which may or may not be accompanied by certain socio-economic or behavioral characteristics. Viewed in this way, the problem of having to identify ethnicity and assimilation inferentially by the behavioral or socio-economic characteristics of aggregate populations is avoided.

III

The definition of ethnicity offered above was given expression through a six-question index contained in the questionnaire. The questions themselves deserve some examination in order to show just what orientations toward what objects were sought. The first question asked the respondent, "What is your nationality?" The feeling was that those respondents who had either assimilated entirely or who manifested a latent urge to do so would produce an "American" response, while those who hadn't yet drifted away from their ethnic moorings would produce an "ethnic" response. Those under a sort of cross-pressure would produce a "mixed" response.[7] The point of the question, however, was to discern if the respondent perceived himself as somehow relating to the ethnic group.

Question two, "Do you object to people who refer to you as Irish/Italian?" sought to measure the respondent's desire to break away from his

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7. An example of an "ethnic" response would be, "I'm Irish," while a mixed response would be, "I am an Italian-American."

ethnic moorings. If he said that he "objected" it was inferred that he manifested some desire to move away from an ethnic identification of the self. Question three of the index, "Do you feel that you are part of the Irish/Italian community?" was bi-directional in nature. It attempted to tap the individual's perception of something called the "ethnic community." More importantly, however, it sought to determine whether, once perceived, the respondent felt himself a member of that community. Ethnic responses were recorded only for those respondents who reflected both orientations.

Question four, "Are you generally happy with the traditions that the Irish/Italians have, or do you think you would be happier if most of them were done away with?" was also bi-directional. It tested the respondent's perception of something called "ethnic traditions" and also whether he perceived them favorably or unfavorably. Again, positive responses were recorded only for those respondents who perceived those traditions favorably. Question five asked, "Generally speaking, do you feel more at home with other Irishmen/Italians than with people from other nationality groups?" Quite simply, this question sought to determine if the respondent manifested an ethnic associational preference rather than a wider reference group orientation from which to take social cues. The final question, "Other than your common heritage, do you feel that you also have some other things in common with the Irish/Italians living in the city?" aimed at determining whether the respondent felt some commonality of interest with other members of his ethnic group.

It should be clear from the explanations of the questions contained in the survey instrument, that the ethnic attitude index attempted to measure the respondent's perceptions of the "self" in relation to his ethnic group in general and to certain objects or aspects which define that ethnic group. The respondent's answers were placed on a scale ranging from zero to twelve points. The higher the total score, the more "ethnic" a respondent's attitudinal orientation was considered to be.

What factors or combinations of factors are associated with the continuation and/or alternatively, the decline of ethnic identification? Before this question can be approached, it was necessary first to select certain attributes contributing to the persistence or decline of ethnic attitudes. Ten attributes were selected for examination. They are (1) intermarriage; (2) area of residence to include areas in which an ethnic group is in a dominant position (ethnic neighborhoods), areas where groups are in competition, and areas in which both groups are in a minority or a position of non-competitive equality; (3) generational level; (4) urban and suburban residence; (5) income; (6) education; (7) age; (8) parental ethnic heritage; (9) divided into those respondents who have two parents of the same ethnic extraction and those who come from mixed ethnic backgrounds; and finally (10) perceived ethnic discrimination. Each of these attributes was then cross-tabulated against four categories of ethnic identification scores ranging in intensity from 0-3 to 10-12 points. Those attributes the cross-tabulations of which manifested the highest levels of statistical significance along with the highest contingency coefficients were assumed to have the closest association with ethnic identifications.

An examination of the direction of the existing relationship will show if the attribute tends to perpetuate or erode these identifications. The rejection range of statistical significance was set at the .05 level.

The four most commonly used indicators of socio-economic achievement seem the logical place to begin the analysis. Professors Dahl and Wolfinger suggest that increases in income, education, and occupational status have an effect on the dilution of ethnic identifications, through changes, for the better, in life styles.[8] By implication, the argument puts considerable importance on age as an additional factor since it is the younger generation respondents who are least likely to be attracted to their ethnic group and concurrently be upward mobile. Examination of the income attribute requires the creation of three income categories. Low income includes respondents who earn $2,999 a year, medium income represents respondents earning between $3,000 and $9,999 a year, and high income includes those respondents earning over $10,000 annually. When income is cross-tabulated with ethnic attitudes no significant relationship emerges. Table 1 reflects an X^2 value of 2.209 and is significant at the .90 level. The data suggest that increases in income are not closely associated with the erosion of attitudinal identifications with the ethnic group.

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8. Dahl, op. cit; Wolfinger, op. cit.

TABLE 1

Income Levels And Ethnic Attitude Scores
For Combined Ethnic Groups

INCOME	0-03	04-06	07-09	10-12	
Low	2.7%	8.7%	4.3%	4.3%	N=37
Medium	4.9%	22.3%	16.8%	11.4%	N=102
High	1.6%	11.4%	7.1%	4.3%	N=45
	N=17	N=78	N=52	N=37	

X^2 = 2.209 Df - 6
Significance Level: .90

Another attribute is the level of education of the respondent. The education level is divided into three categories. Low education includes respondents who indicate that they had attended two years of high school or less, medium education includes those who have at least three years of high school but not more than two years of college, and high education includes those respondents who indicated that they had attended at least three years of college or more. When the education attribute was cross-tabulated against ethnic attitude score, no significant relationship emerged. The X^2 value of Table 2 is 3.330 and is significant at the .07 level, clearly suggesting that educational achievement has little to do with maintaining or eroding ethnic identifications.

TABLE 2

Educational Levels And Ethnic Attitude Scores For Combined Ethnic Groups

Education	0-03	04-06	07-09	10-12	
Low	2.7%	14.7%	10.3%	9.8%	N=69
Medium	5.4%	23.9%	15.8%	9.2%	N=100
High	1.1%	3.8%	2.2%	1.1%	N=15
	N=17	N=78	N=52	N=37	

X^2 = 3.330 Df = 6
Significance Level: .70

Analysis of occupational status produces similar results. Respondents were assigned to one of three general occupational categories. Low occupational status included respondents in "unskilled blue collar" jobs as well as those who said they were "retired." "Skilled blue collar," "lower white collar," and "clerical" workers were combined in the medium occupational status category. The high status category includes respondents holding "managerial" and "professional" types of jobs. When occupational status as a separate attribute was cross-tabulated with ethnic identification scores, the results once again prove to be insignificant. The X^2 value of Table 3 is significant at the .40 level. The conclusion seems inescapable that increases in occupational status have very little influence towards decay in the individual's attachment to an ethnic group.

TABLE 3

Occupational Status Levels And Ethnic Attitude Scores For Combined Ethnic Groups

OCCUPATIONAL STATUS	0-03	04-06	07-09	10-12	
Low	2.7%	11.4%	9.8%	8.2%	N=59
Medium	3.8%	23.9%	13.0%	10.9%	N=95
High	2.2%	7.1%	6.0%	1.1%	N=30
	N=16	N=78	N=53	N=37	

$X^2 = 6.624$ Df = 6
Significance Level: .40

Status achievement attributes accordingly appear to have little impact. It seems likely therefore that the age attribute often associated with the attainment of better jobs, incomes, and education has small impact on reducing ethnic attachments. If respondents are categorized into three age groups--those under 30, those between 31 and 50 years old, and those over 51--and then cross-tabulated with ethnic attitudes scores, we find that the age attribute reflects the lowest degree of relationship of all the attributes examined thus far. Table 4 has an X^2 value of 1.601 and is statistically significant at the .98 level. The data hold that age is not significant in reducing or re-enforcing a respondent's attachment to his ethnic group.

TABLE 4

Age Levels And Ethnic Attitutde Scores
For Combined Ethnic Groups

AGE	0-03	04-06	07-09	10-12
Under 30	1.1%	4.9%	2.1%	1.7%
31-51	3.8%	18.9%	13.5%	10.8%
Over 51	4.3%	18.9%	12.4%	7.5%
	N=17	N=79	N=52	N=37

X^2 = 1.601 Df = 6
Significance Level: .98

Socio-economic attributes examined so far appear to be of little import in reducing or re-enforcing ethnic identifications. Perhaps "background" and "outlook" attributes are more important. The most obvious background attribute is the respondent's parents and their ethnic heritage. Respondents were divided into two groups, those with parents of the same ethnic extraction and those with parents of mixed ethnic extraction. When these categories were cross-tabulated with ethnic attitude scores, however, no significant relationship emerged. The X^2 value in Table 5 is 3.147 and the expressed relationship is significant at the .40 level. The data suggest that having parents of the same ethnic extraction or mixed ethnic extraction does little to reduce or support an individual's identification with his ethnic group.

TABLE 5

Parental Ethnic Heritage and Ethnic Attitude Scores For Combined Ethnic Groups

Parental Heritage	0-03	04-06	07-09	10-12	
Same Extraction	7.0%	36.5%	24.7%	18.8%	N = 162
Mixed Extraction	1.6%	7.0%	3.2%	1.1%	M = 24
	N = 16	N = 81	N = 52	N = 37	

$X^2 = 3.147$ Df = 3
Significance Level: .40

A critical "outlook" variable may be whether the respondent perceives ethnic discrimination against himself or his ethnic group by other groups. The logic of the position argues that ethnic attachments are basically defensive in nature and are likely to be activated only when the respondent perceives that he is being treated unfairly by others because of his ethnic background, or is "perceived" not for "himself" but as an ethnic stereotype. As a reaction, the individual may compensate by reaffirming his attachment and pride in his ethnic group.[9]

If the argument is correct, then some relationship should exist between perceived ethnic discrimination and the intensity with which ethnic identifications are held by the respondent. If the frequency of perceived ethnic discrimination is cross-tabulated with ethnic identification scores, we find that the data suggest that perceived ethnic discrimination

9. This argument appears in an unpublished paper by Charles Burke, "The Ethnic Vote in Massachusetts: An Ethnic Micro-Sample," prepared for Governor Endicott Peabody's campaign staff in 1964.

is not related to the erosion or continuance of ethnic attitudes. In Table 6 cross-tabulation shows an X value of 3.787 and is significant at the .30 level. Perceptions of ethnic discrimination do not appear to be significant factors in maintaining or losing ethnic attachments.[10]

TABLE 6

Perceptions Of Ethnic Discrimination And Ethnic Attitude Scores For Combined Ethnic Groups

	0-03	04-06	07-09	10-12	
Perceived Ethnic Discrimination	1.7%	11.6%	12.1%	6.9%	N = 56
Did Not Perceive Ethnic Discrimination	5.7%	31.8%	16.8%	13.3%	N = 117
	N = 13	N = 75	N = 50	N = 35	

X^2 = 3.787 Df = 3
Significance Level: .30

Four attributes remain to be examined. The first of these is the intermarriage attribute divided into two categories: those respondents marrying within their ethnic group and those choosing partners from outside their ethnic group. If the intermarriage attribute is cross-tabulated with ethnic identification scores, as in Table 1, we find that a significant relationship emerges. The relationship expressed in Table 7 is significant at the .01 level. By calculating the mean ethnic attitude score for each of the two groups examined in the table on the next page, we find that

10. This position is consistent with that reached by Robin Williams, "Ethnocentrism," in Bernard Segal, (ed.) Racial and Ethnic Relations: Selected Readings (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1966), p. 49.

TABLE 7

Intermarriage Attribute and Ethnic Attitude Scores For Combined Ethnic Groups

	0-03	04-06	07-09	10-12	
Married Within Ethnic Group	2.6%	26.9%	20.8%	17.5%	N = 101
Married Outside Ethnic Group	2.6%	20.1%	6.7%	2.6%	N = 48
	N = 8	N = 70	N = 41	N = 30	

X^2 = 10.837 Degree of Freedom: 3
Significance Level: .01 Contingency Coeff: .318

the direction of the relationship is correct. The mean ethnic attitude score for the intramarried group is 7.1 compared to 6.0 for the exogamous group, indicating a declining trend. It seems fair to conclude from the data that intermarriage with people from outside a respondent's ethnic group contributes to a loosening of ethnic identifications.[11] The contingency co-efficient of .318 suggests that the impact of the intermarriage attribute is a moderate one.

The next attribute to be examined is the type of area in which the respondent resides. Three "area of residence" categories were created on the basis of the relative strength of the ethnic group's position vis-à-vis other groups residing the same geographical locale. These three areas are Dominant areas, Competitive areas, and Areas of Non-Competitive Equality. When the area of residence attribute is cross-tabulated with

11. This conclusion is particularly interesting since it was found earlier that having mixed ethnic parental backgrounds apparently has no effect on reducing ethnic identifications. Tentatively it might be offered that a child from a mixed heritage background identifies with the ethnic group of the dominant parent.

ethnic attitude scores, Table 8, the data reveal that a relationship exists between the two attributes which is significant at the .01 level. If the mean attitude scores for each group are calculated we find that the respondents in the Dominant area have the highest score, 7.2, followed by those in the Competitive area with 7.1 and those in the

TABLE 8

Three Types Of Residence Areas And Ethnic Attitude Scores

	0-03	04-06	07-09	10-12	
Dominant	2.7%	12.9%	14.5%	8.3%	N = 71
Competitive	1.6%	9.7%	9.1%	5.4%	N = 48
Non-Competitive	4.8%	20.4%	4.3%	6.5%	N = 67
	N = 17	N = 80	N = 52	N = 37	

X^2 = 16.706 Degree of Freedom: 6
Significance Level: .01 Contingency Coeff: .352

Non-Competitive area with 6.2. Clearly the direction of the relationship is correct, that is, both linear and declining. It appears, then, that this analysis has uncovered another attribute which contributes to the decline of ethnic identifications. The contingency co-efficient of .352 indicates that while the relationship is a moderate one, it is stronger than that for the intermarriage attribute. Clearly, movement out of the ethnic neighborhood has some effect on reducing the intensity of ethnic identifications.

A corollary to movement out of the ethnic neighborhood as a

factor in the decline of ethnic identifications is movement out of the city itself. An examination of the mean ethnic attitude scores of respondents in each type of residence area suggests that moving to another area of the city has only a slight impact on reducing ethnic identifications. The difference between the mean scores of respondents in Dominant and Competitive residence areas, while statistically significant to an acceptable degree, is quite small when compared with the difference between the scores of those respondents in Competitive and Non-Competitive residence areas. What these figures suggest is that movement out of the urban area into a suburban area is likely to have more impact on reducing ethnic identifications than movement within the city itself. [12]

In order to test this hypothesis, respondents were placed into two residence categories, urban and suburban. These categories were then cross-tabulated with ethnic attitude scores. The results of these computations appear in Table 9. If the hypothesis is correct, then the level of significance of the relationship expressed in Table 9, the urban-suburban residence attribute, should be greater than the level of significance

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12. Whether movement out of the ethnic neighborhood is contributing to the decline of ethnic identifications or whether a decline in ethnic identifications is a precondition for such movement is indeed an open question.

TABLE 9

Urban And Suburban Residence And Ethnic Attitude Scores Of Combined Ethnic Groups

	0-03	04-06	07-09	10-12	
Urban	4.3%	22.6%	23.7%	13.5%	N = 119
Suburban	4.8%	20.4%	4.3%	6.5%	N = 67
	N = 17	N = 80	N = 52	N = 37	

X^2 = 16.542 Degrees of Freedom: 3
Significance Level: .001 Contingency Coeff: .349

manifested by the relationship in Table 8, the area of residence attribute. An examination of both these tables indicates that the hypothesis is correct. The relationship expressed in Table 9 is significant at the .001 level compared with a level of significance of .01 for Table 8. If the mean ethnic attitude scores for each group of respondents is calculated, the results indicate that the direction of the relationship is correct. The mean score for the urban group is 7.2 compared to 6.2 for the suburban group. The data suggest that movement out of the area into a suburban environment exercises a greater impact on reducing a respondent's identification with his ethnic group than does movement out of the ethnic neighborhood to another area of the city.

The generational level attribute remains to be tested. An examination of Table 10 reveals that the relationship between generational level and ethnic identification manifests a level of statistical significance

of .001.[13] If the direction of the relationship is examined, it is seen that the direction of the relationship is correct in the sense that ethnic identifications tend to decline in intensity as respondents move further and further away from the immigrant experience. (Figure 1)

TABLE 10

Generational Level And Four Levels Of Ethnic Attitude Scores For Combined Ethnic Groups

	0-03	04-06	07-09	10-12	
Immigrant	0.0%	0.5%	3.3%	4.9%	N = 16
First	3.3%	19.0%	18.4%	11.4%	N = 96
Second	4.3%	14.7%	3.3%	3.8%	N = 48
Third	1.6%	8.2%	3.3%	0.0%	N = 24
	N = 17	N - 78	N = 52	N = 37	

X^2 = 38.372 Degree of Freedom: 9
Significance Level: .001 Contingency Coeff: .508

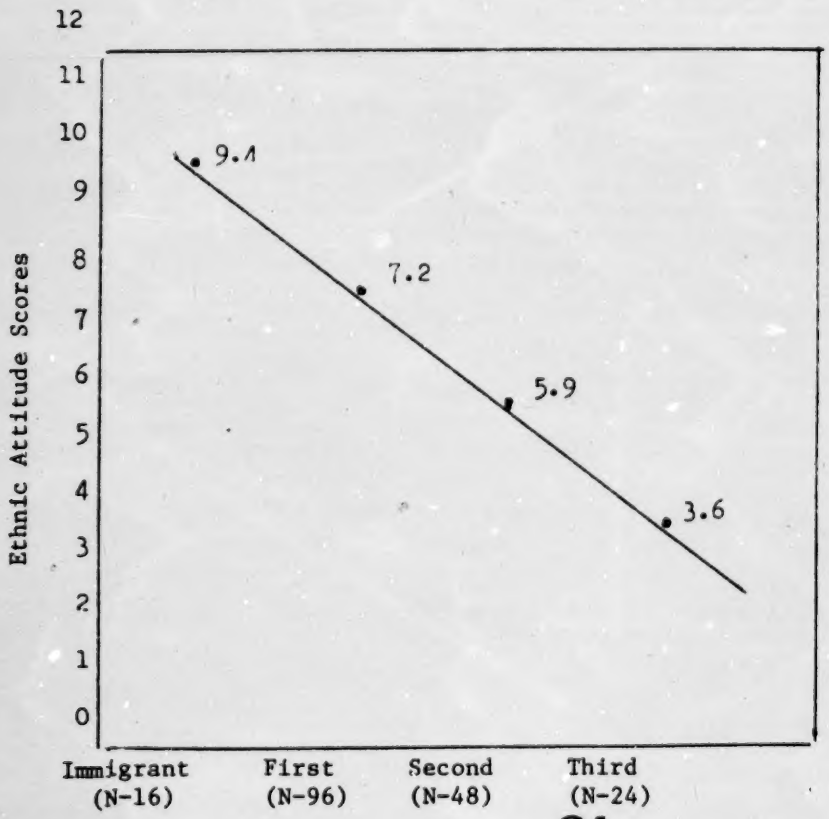
This analysis so far has located four attributes which appear to be significant factors in reducing, or viewed in the opposite sense, maintaining a respondent's attachment to his ethnic group. These four attributes are intermarriage, area of residence, urban-suburban environment, and

13. The X^2 value of Table 10 is actually a great deal beyond the value required for a .001 level of statistical significance.

generational level. The analysis also reveals that income, age, occupational status, parental ethnic extraction, and perceptions of ethnic discrimination appear to have little or no effect on the persistence or decline of ethnic identifications. Just how the four attributes interact to reduce ethnic attachments is not clear and all that can be attempted here is to suggest some tentative notions about the dilution of ethnic identifications.

FIGURE 1

Direction Of Mean Ethnic Attitude Scores
For Each Generation Group



One consideration appears to be an increase in the physical distance between the respondent and his ethnic group. Clearly, living within an ethnic neighborhood is likely to increase the probability that a respondent will marry within his own ethnic group. Life in an ethnic neighborhood may mean that the respondent will be more readily exposed to the psychic and material structures which re-enforce ethnic ties. Movement to another area of the city will probably improve the situation somewhat in the sense that physical distance between the individual and his group will increase, which (if he is not married) will probably increase the chances of exogamy. If the respondent has already married within his heritage group, however, the increase in physical distance may well be offset by his failure to intermarry. Whatever the attributes of the respondent who has moved out of the ethnic neighborhood to another section of the city, both the compactness of the city and ease of communication within the urban area may still offset the gain in physical distance. In such a case, some communication with old friends and family still resident

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14. Robert F. Winch and Scott A. Greer, "Urbanism, Ethnicity and Extended Familism," Journal of Marriage and Family, 30 (Fall, 1968), pp. 40-45, Bartolomeo J. Palisi, "Ethnic Generation and Family Structure," Journal of Marriage and Family, 28 (February, 1966), pp. 49-50, and Stanley Lieberson, "The Impact of Residential Segregation on Ethnic Assimilation," Social Forces, 40 (October, 1961), pp. 52-57, suggest that increases in physical distance dilute ethnic ties.

15. Our data show that only 27.6% of the respondents living in ethnic neighborhoods intermarried compared to 41.6% for respondents living outside the ethnic neighborhood areas.

16. Recall that the "area of residence" attribute and the "intermarriage" attribute both manifest the same level of statistical significance when cross-tabulated with ethnic attitude scores. What this suggests is that one might offset the impact of the other when the attributes are in conflict.

in the old neighborhood will probably continue. Movement to the suburbs, on the other hand, is likely to increase physical distance far more than intra-city mobility. To the extent that the increase in distance is greater, the more probable the impact of the distance attribute will make itself felt with greater force, thus reducing ethnic attachments.[17]

The implications of our analysis with regard to the persistence of ethnic identifications deserve some attention. The question is whether such identifications will continue to exist in non-urban environments and whether they will continue to play the role of dis-position attributes in affecting behavior. Our data indicate clearly that ethnic attachments continue to exist among suburbanites as well as among urban dwellers.[18] The distinction is that such identifications probably serve different purposes for each type of resident. Suburbanites appear to view ethnicity primarily in hubristic terms serving what may be a crisis of identity, while urbanites perceive it as an effective instrument for changing their present socio-economic condition and life style through participation in politics.[19] Further, to the extent that life in the ethnic neighborhood, urban residence, and low rates of intermarriage tend to perpetuate ethnic identifications, it appears that suburbanites will probably lose their

17. Clearly, other forces are also at work; forces such as the desire to conform to a new life style evident in the suburb, a new job requiring a great deal of travel, and a psychological desire to be rid of negative ethnic stereotypical images, to name just a few.

18. The average ethnic identification score of suburban respondents is 6.2. Further, they perceived the ethnic background of our interviewers at a rate only slightly lower than that of urban residents. The rates of perception are 29.9% and 31.7% for suburban and urban residents respectively.

19. The term "hubris" may be too strong in that "pride," hubris, in this context is less one of arrogance than an act of personality defense against the human solvent of mass and technological society. This notion is elaborated in Richard A. Gabriel, "A New Theory of Ethnic Voting," Polity, Vol. IV, No. 4 (Summer, 1972).

attachment to the ethnic group before urban residents. Yet, the fact that income, occupational status, age, and education appear to have little or nothing to do with the decline of ethnic attitudes suggests that even in the suburbs, the decline of ethnic attachments may come about rather slowly.

Urban residents, on the other hand, are not likely to lose their attachments to the ethnic group for a long time to come. If, as our analysis indicates, life in the city is related to the persistence of ethnic ties, it seems reasonable to conclude that as long as the urban environment does not undergo severely radical changes, ethnic attachments will continue, probably drawing re-enforcement from the persistence of ethnic neighborhoods. To this point in our history ethnic neighborhoods have shown a remarkable capacity to survive even the most powerful of technological, social, and economic changes which have occurred since 1950. There is no apparent evidence which this study can marshal, for example, to show that the Italian and Irish neighborhoods of Providence are in the process of being dissolved. And if in fact the more affluent members of the ethnic neighborhood move to the suburbs, a proposition which merits further consideration in itself, then it is logical to assume that ethnicity will become more closely associated with low socio-economic status than it probably is at present. If this occurs, then ethnicity as an instrument of protection and advancement via political participation may very well increase for the urban resident.[20] And while it may be safe to assume that ethnic identifications will decline more rapidly in the suburbs than in the cities,

20. It should be noted in this context that the rise of Black political organizations has generally tended to coincide with the rediscovery of a sense of Negro identity.

it would appear incorrect to assume that ethnicity, either as a psychological or political factor, is already dead in either place.

VI

Any discussion which addresses the question of assimilation and acculturation inevitably becomes stuck in the quaqmire of definition. The simple fact of the matter is that sociologists do not agree on the nature of these two concepts. As defined by this study assimilation is "the measurable attitudinal movement away from ethnic identification and such a definition indicates of itself the method."

Far more important is the attitudinal aspect of the definition. Attitudes imply a focus on psychological attachments which can be examined apart from the ecological structures which may or may not support these attachments. Theoretically, a perfectly assimilated respondent would reflect a total loss of identity with his ethnic group.[21] Rather than operationalize the definition of assimilation at the theoretical extreme, we chose instead to allow for the continued existence of some minimal level of ethnic attachment.[22] Thus, respondents with ethnic identification scores

21. The notion that assimilation involves a total loss of psychological identification with one's ethnic group is suggested by Melford Spiro, "The Acculturation of American Ethnic Groups," American Anthropologist, 57 (1955), pp. 1243-1244. Evidence nonetheless exists that ethnic neighborhoods are not breaking down. The Boston Irish, New York Jews, Italians and Poles in Chicago, Italians in Newark, N.J., and the French in Woonsocket, R.I., all manifest cohesion within and attachment to their neighborhoods. See Section VIII and footnote 29, infra.

The decision to allow the existence of three points above the theoretical definition of assimilation was made in an attempt to minimize the "seek and ye shall find" problem which plagues survey research. Regardless of the exactness of any index, it is almost inevitable that one will get some affirmative responses simply by chance. By increasing the point score which operationally defines assimilation, the element of chance may have been reduced somewhat.

of three or fewer points are considered to be assimilated.[23]

If our proposition that assimilation and acculturation are distinct concepts is to hold, some indicator other than a psychological one must be used to define acculturation. We have chosen to identify acculturated respondents in terms of their social and economic "sub-status" clusters.[24] It is fair to assume that respondents with a medium level of income, education, and occupational status are acculturated in the sense that they have potentially a greater freedom of movement within the American social structure than respondents in low income, occupational, and educational categories. In short, such respondents become "more acceptable" to other social strata than they previously would have been.[25]

Having offered these two definitions, it must now be asked if assimilation occurs before or after acculturation, or if the two occur simultaneously. If assimilation occurs before acculturation, then the poorer the group, the less likely it is to be attached to its ethnic group. A reconstruction of the relationship between status level achievement and the intensity of ethnic identification, Figure 2 shows that this expectation is not supported by the data. The data reveal that ethnic attachments are strongest among the two status groups lowest on the scale. Ethnic identifications begin to erode only after the ethnic group has achieved some measure of economic advancement. It would appear valid, then, to state that assimilation occurs neither before nor simultaneously with acculturation. Instead ethnic identifications begin to erode only

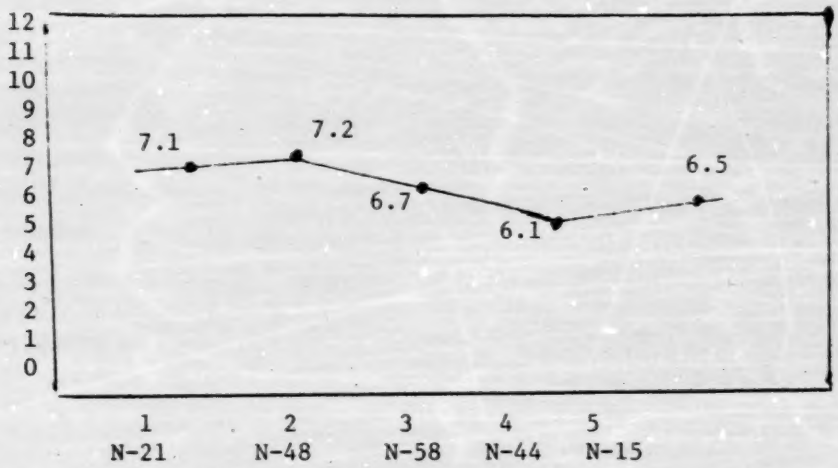
23. Thus, in general terms, the index depresses the actual degree with which ethnic attachments are held by given respondents.
24. The concept of "status clusters" is first employed by William M. Dobriner, Class in Suburbia (Prentice-Hall Inc., 1963), pp. 31-32.
25. The notion that acceptability in the American class structure requires the attainment of certain status "sub-clusters" finds support in Spiro, op. cit., p. 1244.

after the group has acculturated.

Concerning the question of the rate at which an ethnic group will assimilate, much depends upon the frame of reference.

FIGURE 2

Mean Ethnic Attitude Scores Of Respondents On Each Status Level For Combined Ethnic Groups



The choice of reference frame may dictate generational level, or status level as a background attribute for examining rates of assimilation. Further, the choice of a reference framework will also affect the conclusions. Yet, curiously enough, this difficulty does not arise here. An exmination of the data, whether against the background attribute of generation level or status level, reveals essentially the same conclusion.

An examination of Figure 2 shows that while a certain minimal level of socio-economic achievement appears to be required for the assimilation process to begin, once it has started it proceeds rather slowly. Even upper-class respondents continue to reflect intensities of ethnic

identification considerably above the level which has been defined as assimilation. Figure 1 reveals that when the generational level attribute is employed as the background variable the data show that even after three generations have been born and raised in the United States, the third generation still manifests a degree of ethnic identification that is above our assimilation level. And if it is recalled that the relationship between generational level and status achievement is not a perfect one, we can only conclude that not all members of an ethnic group advance at equal rates.[26]

At this stage it appears that assimilation as a process by which individuals lose a sense of identification with their ethnic group occurs rather slowly. Even assuming that the sheer passage of time (generational level) contributes to assimilation, the process will probably take at least four generations after the immigrant experience to reach fulfillment.[27] But even assuming that some measure of economic advancement (status level) is required for the process to begin, then since members of an ethnic group do not advance at equal rates, the assimilation process may be retarded even longer for those respondents who continue to under-achieve, marry within their ethnic group, and live in the ethnic neighborhood. In either case, assimilation appears as a very slow process indeed.

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26. This conclusion is in agreement with that reached in an article by A. Simirenko, "Manheim's Generational Analysis and Acculturation," British Journal of Sociology, 17 (September, 1966), pp. 292-299. The point is simply that within any given ethnic generational grouping different rates of acculturation--defined in terms of socio-economic achievement--are likely to occur among individuals within the group.

27. Wolfinger, using Quebec, Canada, as an example, argues that the mere passage of time by itself does not reduce ethnic identification. Wolfinger, op. cit., p. 906.

VII

The conclusion which emerges from this study is that psychological attachments to one's ethnic group die very hard. Certain attributes--income, education, occupation, age, perceived ethnic discrimination, and ethnic parental background--appear to have little or no direct effect on reducing these attachments, suggesting that certain ecological structures need not accompany an ethnic attitudinal disposition. The factors which appear to exercise the most direct impact on reducing ethnic attachments are generational level, area of residence, suburban environment, and intermarriage. Yet, while respondents who manifest these characteristics have a significantly less intense attachment to their ethnic group, they are still not assimilated. Among these respondents, ethnic attitudes continue to exist at levels above those of assimilation.

Assimilation, viewed as the absence of ethnic attachments, appears to be a process which requires a certain degree of acculturation for it to begin. Yet, even then, it is a process which takes a great deal of time to accomplish and, among most respondents interviewed by this study, remains a process which has not yet reached completion. The connective link between ethnic attitudes and social and political behavior, while not addressed directly by the study, probably is most tenuous among those respondents with less intense levels of ethnic identification. However, it must be emphasized that ethnic attitudes, at any level of intensity, do not automatically result in ethnic behavior. Rather, such attitudes are more plausibly viewed as dispositive attributes which require certain "trigger" attributes to translate these attitudes into relevant overt behavior.[28] Indeed, it is

28. For more on what trigger attributes are at work, see Gabriel, op. cit., Chapter IV (1969).

suggested that the critical difference between respondents who hold different intensities of ethnic identifications is the facility with which these attitudes can be triggered to stimulate overt ethnic behavior.

Our evidence indicates that conscious ethnic attachments will probably continue to exist for quite some time even on the part of manifestly acculturated respondents. What may diminish, however, will be the facility with which ethnic identifications transfer into overt behavior. Ethnic attitudes may tend to become less and less relevant to behavior as time passes, remaining only as psychological dispositions of ethnic pride to be dusted off and given vent on appropriate social occasions. Thus, while ethnic attitudes may remain for some time, ethnic political and social behavior will most likely decline if social and political conditions permit--which they may not.

Given that some social scientists persist in defining assimilation in terms of manifest behavior, whether of individuals or aggregate populations, future studies are bound to conclude that most ethnic groups have in fact already assimilated. But if assimilation is viewed as involving primarily the loss of certain ethnic attitudinal dispositions, then the door is left open to further research. What social scientists must first decide is how properly to define the concept of assimilation and the means of measurement. This study has offered at least one alternative toward the search for precision.

VIII

If ethnicity dies hard, it could be under certain ominous conditions be revived. The white ethnic neighborhoods of Chicago are beginning to resemble

garrisons because crime is largely perceived as black crime. The Italian North Side in Boston takes pride that no black may safely enter after dark, and but diffidently during the day. In New York, prosperous middle-class Jews march and demonstrate against low-cost housing in Forest Hills, whence they fled, seeking safety from crime and violence identified with the presence of blacks, the decay of a central city and all this decay means in terms of the loss of traditional values, social order, and deference to historical "American" norms.[29] The result is that old ethnic attitudes and ways tend to be revived, and groups with a sense of common descent may rally as a defense against the collapse of what they see as order, security, and predictability. All of these symptoms--the persistence of ethnicity, the "lagering" of ethnic neighborhoods into "defense" bastions, may signal the reaction of people to whom their ethnicity is at least one form of identity and defense against the pulverizing effect of modernity.

The effect of modern western civilization appears to devastate traditional ways, substituting for these ways a prosperous society that seems without national goals. Some reactions to "progress" take the form of ideological conservatism. In Germany one response has been a so-called neo-Nazi persistence stressing a return to past national cultural values and

29. See Nathan Glazer, "When the Melting Pot Doesn't Melt," (New York Times, section 6, 2 Jan. 1972; p. 12 Passim).

and political forms.[30] In the United States, a pluralist society, there is no single, homogeneous national cultural past for the ethnic. In many cases only the ethnic group is available as a source of values. Thus, the persistence of ethnicity may be seen as a defensive reaction to modern industrial society and one of its primary costs--atomization and the resulting isolation of the individual.

All this last is speculative, even so there may be some measurable aspects in the rapid flux of American society which if continued may serve in the future to re-enforce the sense of ethnicity.

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30. See Erwin Scheuch and Hans D. Klingemann, "Theorie des Rechtsradikalismus in westlichen Industriegesellschaften", Hamburger Jahrbuch fuer Wirtschafts und Gesellschaftspolitik, 1967, No. 12., pp. 2-29. The authors hold that the destruction of traditional society costs political man too much. In the search for trustworthy goals in a society bent on change, where few traditional values seem secure, some react with a search for for the "solid" past. In Germany this amounts to traditional nationalism. For the "American" ethnic, if the nation is no longer credible, then he has little alternative but his ethnic group as a source of identity and values. The result may be a closure of certain groups from the life of the United States as a whole.